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ABSTRACT

In seeking ways to address racial problems on college campuses this study applied a hermeneutical approach to social relations which acknowledges the centrality of actors' perspectives in the creation of social reality. In this model, based on the hermeneutical theory of Hans-George Gadamer, conflict has neither a negative or positive influence on social relations; instead conflict is something naturally presented in society. The study used Gadamer's theory to examine two incidents occurring on the campus of a mid-sized state-supported college which first developed an institutional discriminatory harassment policy in 1986. Data included ethnographic interviews with 24 student and administrator informants and transcripts of two focus group discussions. Analysis illustrates how members of the campus community framed notions of race relations and how they perceived and interpreted events. Analysis found that participants' perceptions of the need for, and expected outcomes of the discriminatory harassment policy were shaped by the extent to which individuals and groups shared experiences within the social context. These experiences helped to shape distinct, yet inter-related constituencies within the college based on participants' social position and race. (Contains 9 references.) (JB)

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Meaning Making, Discriminatory Harassment, and Institutional Policy

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A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association,
New Orleans, April 5, 1994

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Intervention programs developed in response to problems of race relations tend to focus on the manifestations of prejudice and discrimination in American society (actions), to be prescriptive with respect to altering prejudicial attitudes or behaviors of individuals, rather than grounded in an understanding of the nature of social relations *per se*. The paradigm of the social sciences limits the investigation of social problems largely to cause-and-effect or correlation models. As new social problems emerge (both in terms of their forms and natures), the simple manipulation of pre-existing causal variables will no longer be effective in addressing new and different conditions. In times of significant social change, the exploration and description of *how problems exist* is a necessary prerequisite to prescribing how the problem may be *addressed*.

The need to rethink our conceptual approach to the study of race relations can be found in language describing race and society, calling for the equitable distribution of economic, political and educational resources. If order arises from the ongoing "structuring" of social relations, a result of negotiating social values in an organizational context[1], research can be undertaken from the perspective of understanding[2] the desired state of affairs as perceived *by the social actors*, not from an existing social order[3], requiring the application of a theoretical construct focusing on systemic contradictions. Such an alternative is available by adopting a hermeneutical approach to

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[1] Charles J. Fombrun, "Structural Dynamics Within and Between Organizations", Administrative Sciences Quarterly 31 (September 1986): 404.

[2] Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 46, 114-122.

[3] John Horton, "Order and Conflict Theories of Social Problems as Competing Ideologies," in Norman C. Yetman and C. Hoy Steele, eds., Majority and Minority: The Dynamics of Racial and Ethnic Relations (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), 18-21.

research in social relations, acknowledging the centrality of actors' perspectives in the creation of social reality.[4] In this model, conflict does not have a negative (nor a positive) influence on social relations; instead, conflict is recognized as something naturally (or socially) present in society, a potentially positive influence of incompatible, but not irreconcilable, group interests.[5] In other words, we are called to examine the cultural politics representing individual and group perceptions (symbolic, cultural or social) transcending actions. It is the first step in an exploration of the relationships between individual perceptions of social reality and the process of social policy.

The Study and Its Setting

Highlands State University[6] (HSU), a mid-size State-supported institution, first developed and implemented an institutional discriminatory harassment policy in 1986. This policy is designed to prohibit acts (including speech) directed at racial, ethnic, or religious groups, or acts addressing individuals' sexual orientation, acts having

> the intent to harass, demean or intimidate the victim(s), and which inflicts serious emotional injury or would likely cause the victim(s) to retaliate in such a manner as to breach the peace. . . . Because the University is committed to the free and open exchange of ideas and to the guarantees provided by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the office of the Attorney General will review all complaints of discriminatory harassment to determine whether cases are actionable under this policy.[7]

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[4] In this paper, the hermeneutical theory developed by Hans-George Gadamer will be used as an organizing construct (see Palmer, op. cit.).

[5] Lawrence Bobo, "Group Conflict, Prejudice and the Paradox of Contemporary Racial Attitudes," in Phyllis A. Katz and Dalmas A. Taylor, eds., Eliminating Racism (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 91.

[6] Highlands State University is a pseudonym, as are the names of all informants in this study. Pseudonyms are employed to maintain the confidentiality of the institution and its participants.

[7] [Highlands] State University, "Code of Conduct," 1990-91.

Analysis of transcripts of semi-structured and structured ethnographic interviews with 24 student- and administrator-informants and transcripts of two separate focus group sessions, involving four groups totalling, 21 students and administrators, provided the data for this paper. Standard protocols were used for interviews and focus group sessions. Differences in individuals' perceptions can be attributed to differences in the structures of expectation[8] held by individuals and groups. Using a grounded theory form of analysis[9], the language of the participants was examined to reveal the structures of expectation shaping participants' perceptions of the discriminatory harassment policy and perspectives on social relations in general.[10] Understanding the social context of individual and collective cognitive processes, and examining individuals' structures of expectation rather than opinions about the policy itself, moved analysis away from the relative "rightness" or "wrongness" of the policy, focusing it instead on the business of culture production within and between groups on campus.

Two Incidents That Serve as Illustrations of How Race Relations Were Framed

Two incidents serve as somewhat comprehensive illustrations of how members of the campus community framed notions of race relations. The "sorority incident" illustrates how issues of difference are perceived; the "homecoming incident" illustrates how these differences are interpreted.

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[8] Deborah Tannen, "What's in a Frame? Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations," in Roy O. Freedle, ed. New Directions in Discourse Analysis (Norwood, NJ: ABLEX Publishing Company, 1979), 137-182.

[9] Anselm Strauss, Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[10] The perspectives discussed here are those held by participants in this study. This is not to say that the perspectives presented here represent the universe of possible or likely perspectives present among the various groups at the University, only that they represent those revealed from the language and experiences of the classes of social actors who participated in this study.

The Sorority Incident as an Example of the Policy in Action

During the Fall term of 1989 members of a predominantly black sorority were assaulted by a large group of residents as they passed through a quad at HSU. Unlike other racially-motivated actions taken against HSU students, this incident resulted in a large-scale disruption of the campus, and involved a number of students. To most sorority members, this assault seemed to be a racially-motivated attack.

The distinctive, ritualized pledging behaviors of the sorority require pledges to walk closely together in a line, and to sing as they moved across campus. After an evening meeting in the student union, members were making their way across campus, and as they marched across the quad bordered on four sides by residence halls, racial epithets were shouted at them from the neighboring residence halls. An investigation by the Office of Public Safety identified no perpetrators; therefore the incident was inactionable under the guidelines of the University's discriminatory harassment policy.

The sorority incident was perceived by most participants to be clearly race-related, yet no formal policy response was forthcoming in response to it. No action could have been taken under the policy because no one was identified and no one came forth who would admit to having any part in the action. Therefore no hearing could be held. To many participants, the incident illustrated the way the University demonstrated its commitment to the policy.

The Homecoming Incident

Homecoming 1990 at HSU was marked by two homecoming dances. The first was one sponsored by the Homecoming Committee and the second by the Union of African-American Students (UAS). The Program Committee which was responsible for planning the dance had no black students among its members. According to the Board's president, members of the predominantly black fraternity on campus organized an alternate event in conjunction with the UAS. The Board president believed this action was taken because no black performers were booked for the event. This perception was somewhat confirmed by the UAS president who said that the alternate event was planned because the black presence on campus was so small, the first dance would simply have disenfranchised black students, therefore a separate event was necessary in order to promote a sense of belonging among black students in a predominantly white environment.

While some white students and administrators recognized that the lack of minority representation on the Program Board may have led to the problem to begin with, most white students viewed the UAS dance as an act of separatism which violated what these students believed was the collective ownership of the first homecoming dance. Black students, on the other hand, saw the need for a distinct event from their perspective of relative isolation.

Of course this was not an actionable offense, and no one believed it to be one. However, the number of times this incident, along with the sorority incident, were offered as examples of how race relations played out at HSU suggest these events are meaningful in this analysis.

Findings: Perceptions of the Policy as a Guide to Perceptions of Race Relations

Participants' perceptions of the need for, and expected outcomes of, HSU's discriminatory harassment policy were shaped by extent to which individuals and groups shared experiences with the social context; it is not that social actors "saw" different things; rather, they saw the same things *differently*. These experiences helped to shape distinct, yet inter-related constituencies within the University based on participants' social position and race.

Differences Between Administrators' and Students' Perceptions

The dominant administrative perspective on policy issues can be characterized by an internal, shared perspective among administrators distinct from the student perspective. The administrative perspective suggested that college is a "safe" place where individuals can prepare themselves for "productive and meaningful roles in society", and to ensure the process was successful, rules are established "for the students' benefit." Students, on the other hand, had a different set of ideas about what college "should be." College, for most students, was an "experience", a rehearsal for life. College was considered to be a place where students learned to

"deal with" issues they would confront in the "real world." Therefore, the college environment should allow students to have the chance to engage in the kinds of experiences which would prepare them for life. Students shared these perspectives about the University and its policies, regardless of their race.

One difference between students' and administrators' perceptions of the need for increased understanding can be found in the location of agency for achieving change. Students believed that a process designed to increase understanding needed to be initiated by students; administrators saw the process as a responsibility of the faculty and student affairs staff of the institution.

Differences Between Black and White Perceptions

Clearly the differences between black and white students' perspectives is revealed in the differences in their cognitive constructs of the role group history plays in identity formation. For whites, history is an almost universally shared understanding of what it means to be "equal" in American society. Those who spoke from an equality-orientation (mostly whites) believed that groups were fundamentally "equal" to one another, therefore differential treatment of particular groups served to tip the social balance in their favor. These participants exhibited a perspective best described as a "bootstrap mentality": special programming for minority groups was disadvantageous and "unfair" to most members of society.

Those who adopted an equity-orientation (mostly blacks) believed, to the contrary, that certain groups (minorities in particular) were historically disadvantaged and must be assured "equity" to put them on par with the dominant social group. These participants argued that society was not "fair" and therefore had an obligation, through special academic programming, admissions

and financial aid, to level the playing field before beginning the games in order that all groups have "the same chance" of succeeding.[11]

Another example of the role of history in perspective-development can be found in the relative degree to which individuals' primary social identification was with the ethnic group or with the larger society. The tendency of blacks to turn to "their culture" as a source of power runs contrary to the predominant white confidence in the leveling power of the larger society. Whites expressed some hostility toward blacks for this orientation, believing it allowed blacks to "set themselves apart", creating hostility between blacks and whites. Blacks, on the other hand, considered their historical alienation from the larger society as a hostile act itself. Their only alternative was to turn inwardly, away from the dominant society. Likewise, special programming for minority students tended to set these students apart on an institutional level. Special academic programming and support personnel were seen by whites as available to minority students but not to white students. Because there existed an Office of Minority Affairs charged with the responsibilities for minority academic support, there existed in the minds of whites a fundamentally different set of expectations assigned to black students.

A Model for Understanding Perspectives

Differences in perspectives of the discriminatory harassment policy were shaped by the experiences individuals had with social life apart from the policy itself. These experiences both shaped individuals' structures of expectation and defined their perceptions about issues they believed to be related to these past experiences. Analysis revealed three core categories which accounted for most of the differences in participants' perspectives. Differences in the definitions

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[11] Much of the black orientation is similar to what has been termed the effects of "cultural discontinuity", especially secondary discontinuities, the result of a more-or less enduring caste-like difference based on unequal social position. Members of these groups tend to formulate their problems in terms of a collective, institutional perspective (John U. Ogbu, "Cultural Discontinuities and Schooling", Anthropology and Education Quarterly 13[4]: 292-300).

of equality and equity, in the sources of individual empowerment, and in the extent to which individuals and groups are uninformed and misinformed about other groups characterized these core categories. The first, the equality/equity perspective, comprised those statements that generally addressed structural issues that shaped social relationships. The second, the empowerment perspective, derived from the equality/equity perspective in that the relationships addressed in the first core category shaped the locus of power for individuals and groups. Differences between society- and group-derived power, and the uses of this power, defined participants' perceptions about the significance of differences between individuals and groups, and the parameters of these differences. The conflict between individuality and conformity, derived in part from participants' perceptions of the locus of collective power, shape, and often challenge, individuals' self-images. The inter-relatedness of the empowerment perspective and its constituent parts with concerns about the definition of "equal" as they related to social relations, served to force participants to turn back on their perceptions, to examine their own "structures of expectation" in the context of what they knew about *other's* structures of expectation. This examination/re-examination defined the third perspective, communion, wherein conflict was recognized as a result of individuals' lack of understanding about others' experiences and perceptions.

Equality and Equity

The equality/equity perspective was defined by participants' statements indicating their perceptions of what it meant for individuals to be treated "fairly" by society. The equality dimension of this perspective was characterized by the relative strength of participants' beliefs that *the same application of "the rules" should be afforded all persons, regardless of an individual's social position*. The equity dimension of this perspective was characterized by the relative strength of participants' beliefs that *differential applications of "the rules" should be afforded to those in*

social positions which had prevented them from receiving benefits from society equal to those received by members of historically dominant groups.

Two somewhat contradictory concepts defined the equality/equity perspective. The *equality* component derived from a sense that everyone should be treated *equally*. The policy as it was written was designed to ensure equal treatment by controlling behaviors and actions; to be harassed because of racial differences denied that equality. Actions were simply outward and visible signs that certain individuals did not accept the concept of equality between the races. It was necessary, therefore, to control these kinds of actions. When white participants spoke about the policy, they spoke about the need to control actions. While the need to control actions was generally linked by speakers to the need to promote understanding, that understanding was generally conceived of in terms of the actions themselves. A homecoming dance sponsored by the UAS lead to controversy and conflict. White students could not understand why the UAS organized and promoted a program concurrent with, but apart from, the University's homecoming activities. The UAS homecoming program was an action that by its very nature rejected "equality" by setting one group apart from the majority.

The *equity* component of this perspective derived from an alternative view of the nature of the relationships between majority and minority groups. While black participants discussed the policy in terms of the need to enforce behavioral expectations, the range of behaviors deemed applicable under the policy was much broader than those cited by white participants. Discriminatory harassment was not limited to overt actions taken against blacks; rather, the kinds of actions and behaviors included in black participants' list of "harassing" behaviors extended to differential treatment in the classroom, the institutional exclusion of blacks from certain student employment opportunities, and the insensitivity of whites to blacks feelings as demonstrated by their actions. To that extent, a discriminatory harassment policy, as defined by black participants, should be designed to promote understanding between racial groups. Black participants tended to cite white's failure to understand and acknowledge the "cultural differences" between blacks and

whites. Blacks spoke about the importance of these differences between blacks and whites, and of the need for whites to understand that blacks cannot "be white". These kinds of differences demanded an "equity" approach be adopted to counteract the influences of the lack of understanding and continued institutional racism.

Again, the UAS homecoming incident served as a focal point for this perspective. Because blacks represented so small a segment of the University population, they believed it was necessary for them to hold an event through which they could come together as a group, to identify with one another. They believed that the larger homecoming program would be geared to the majority, and "cultural" differences necessitated a separate event. Blacks did not view this as "separatism"; rather they saw the program as something consistent with their cultural orientation. Difference, to black participants, was something "normal" for them. Unlike whites, who tended to see difference as threatening, blacks recognized that differences existed between blacks and whites and worked from that realization. The sorority incident also demonstrated a similar set of differences, and likewise revealed the context of the black perspective. For blacks who participated in this study, because they recognized and accepted that differences existed between blacks and whites, the equity component tended to be adopted in interpreting events.

Differences between the equality and equity components of this perspectives implied, again, that historically-grounded "cultural" differences existed between the groups. The respective experiences and assumptions that shaped black and white views of the world, and which screened new experiences so they conformed to past experiences shaped, in turn, their expectations of future experiences. The equality/equity perspective was defined by the competing beliefs in "equality" and the equally powerful, yet countervailing, belief in the necessity of ensuring "equity". If all individuals were really "equal", for one group to "make itself different" from the rest suggested to many whites that blacks were not interested in equality. To white informants, "equality" was the cornerstone of American political philosophy, and to be "different" (or to be treated differently) was something not completely American. To the majority, when this difference

manifested itself in separation, frustration with minority-race persons resulted, and revealed itself when informants spoke of enrollment quotas, special financial aid opportunities, student programming, and administrative tolerance for black greek-letter organizations' "hazing" practices. In each of these cases, the minority was perceived as being treated differently from the majority. Such special status led some whites to act out against the group, making necessary policies proscribing aversive behaviors.

Black respondents knew that whites were resentful of the "special" programs available to blacks. But blacks suggested that whites would be less resentful if they understood the effects of history on American blacks. Such resentment necessitated policies designed to ensure minorities were accorded equal education and economic opportunity. "Equal" meant "equitable" to black informants. Equitable meant that measures to ensure equality of opportunity had to be taken since some people were behind others at the starting line.

Empowerment Defined

The empowerment perspective was based on the relative degree to which participants' believed that *individual's social power was embodied in and derived from the racial/ethnic affiliation or from affiliation with the larger society*. In this sense, empowerment meant the social bases of individual and collective identity, self-image, and locus of control which shaped individuals' actions, behaviors and beliefs.

The relative assessment of the importance of one's race or ethnic group compared to the extent of one's participation in the larger society defines this perspective and it describes some of the differentiation between white and black participants. The existence of the Union of African-American Students and its related programming (the homecoming controversy in particular) represented for many whites the perception that blacks were not interested in an "equal" society, but rather a differentiated one. Black students' behaviors were believed to set them apart from the

larger society, and that blacks were more interested in their ethnic affiliation than with their responsibilities to the larger society, and created a difference between whites and blacks that whites believed to be antithetical to black demands for "equality."

Empowerment for whites seemed to reside in the concept of a social contract understood to exist between individuals in a society. Black participants believed they had been systematically and institutionally denied access to the majority culture. As a result of this alienation, blacks tended to turn inward, looking for support within a smaller, racially-similar group. Because blacks believed the majority judged them to be "socially inferior", it was necessary for blacks to establish race-specific support groups (the UAS, for example). Special social and academic support services were believed by black administrators and students to be necessary for black students to adapt to life at HSU. Because many black students had gone to predominantly black high schools in predominantly black communities before coming to HSU, they were more aware of the relative disempowerment of blacks at HSU and in The Uplands in general. Seeing blacks in subservient roles created a need among black students to achieve some level of power for themselves within the University. The result was the close affinity of many blacks, students and administrators, for the UAS. This "inward" focus provided blacks with a sense of power derived from their group, not borrowed from a society from which they felt alienated.

Communion Defined

The shared information perspective represented the relative degree to which individuals' believed that by *expanding the base of shared information and knowledge about others, their actions, and their beliefs, better social relations among groups would result*. Participants' knew they didn't always understand one another, and recognized the importance of improving the level of understanding in order to improve social relations on campus. But, again, differences in the

concept of "understanding" itself contributed to differences in actors' perceptions of the discriminatory harassment policy.

Understanding of those who are different was central to the black perceptions of the need for social change. For blacks, the need to resist assimilation into "white" society required them to understand *both* black and white society. Through this understanding both societies, blacks believed they maintained a balance between both aspects of their dual reality. But they also understood that the actions by blacks which demonstrated a pride in their shared culture were threatening to whites. Much of this threat was the result of blacks' apparent insistence on their "difference" from whites. To many blacks, acceptance of this "difference" was central to improving understanding. They had accepted, and in some ways had chosen, difference for themselves, while recognizing the related demands such "difference" placed on the individuals who had chosen it. They spoke of the importance for blacks to understand the social environment in order to be successful in it, to understand that "to be black" is not always the best way to be in all situations. This did not imply, however, that "blackness" was to be sacrificed for the sake of being comfortable in white society; rather, many black participants' recognized that "being black" may require being uncomfortable in some circumstances, or in other case, making a decision about how much of one's identity should be sacrificed for the sake of the larger society.

For whites, "difference" was considered an anomaly, something to be "blended" away. For many whites, understanding implied the creation of something new, but was built on the existing foundation of equality, the essential "sameness" of all people. This approach to increasing understanding was essentially ahistorical; it began in the here and now. White participants' used phrases like, "I don't understand why we can't get past the color of someone's skin," when they spoke about increasing understanding, discounting the importance of color as a symbol in shaping the understanding individuals held of others. White participants believed that increased understanding of members of minority groups would lead to better relations between the races, but

they also believed that education must flow in both directions. White experiences with blacks suggested to them that blacks shared their "culture" with others only grudgingly.

Administrators' attempts to help students "celebrate" diversity were limited to elites within the campus community. Apart from one session during freshmen orientation when issues of multiculturalism were discussed, special programming was generally offered only *to* specific groups of opinion leaders (residence directors and fraternity and sorority officers) or *by* special constituencies (for example, the Union of African-American Students). Attempts to understand special constituencies were limited to those with responsibility for them, and did not include others within the University community with whom they must interact. For instance, student affairs administrators reached a higher level of understanding of the importance of ritual pledging behavior in black greek-letter organizations; it was they who needed to make a determination about this behavior's relationship to the hazing policy. This understanding did not extend beyond the administrative level, into the larger student body, many of whom did not understand why black fraternities and sororities were permitted to "haze" their pledges, while "white" fraternities and sororities could not.

Understanding was seen differentially as important to creating a community. Administrators tended to see their role in improving understanding among groups as designing programs to "orchestrate" communication. Required residence halls programming, lecture series', and special events sponsored by clubs and student organizations were seen as primary vehicles to promote understanding. Administrators recognized that while opportunities existed for students to expand their understanding of others, few took advantage of them. These efforts, as described by many participants, had been relatively unsuccessful in promoting increased understanding. Students, on the other hand, saw themselves as partners with the University in meeting these challenges, but believed the University's response to issues was superficial. The University needed to be more student-centered, according to student comments, and such a partnership was seen as a way to change the nature of the relationship between administrators and students, one now seen

largely in adversarial terms. Students' perceptions suggested they felt a responsibility for creating the institutional community, and that HSU was a dynamic social organism of which they were a part.

Hermeneutics, History and Policy Analysis

The problem with the situation at Highlands State University is that the discriminatory harassment policy, however well intentioned, cannot transcend the cultural politics of race relations on that campus. The issues of equality/equity, empowerment and communion are so forcefully at work that no policy designed to achieve justice can ever be effective in promoting understanding among the groups on campus. The process of "justice" is a very different process from "understanding", and one without the other leaves only half the educational task completed. This paradox can be better understood within the hermeneutical framework of Hans-George Gadamer.[12]

Gadamer's notion of hermeneutics moves beyond attempts to understand *representations* of artifacts of misunderstanding to an understanding of experience that is historically grounded and connected to the present. As such, interpretation is always particularly-located and, as such, locates questions particularly in time and space.[13] Policy "questions" are situated in the near timelessness of justice, relying on witness' recollection and their willingness to participate, and on the accused's acts of rationalized remorse. Such processes are intellectualized and removed from lived experience, and are thereby inadequate to improving race relations on campus. Questions of conduct must be placed in an objective perspective: the rule must have been violated. However, as can be seen at HSU, that it means for the policy to have been violated varies from group to group, and this variation is grounded in historical and cultural interpretations of the acts. Justice

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[12] Palmer, op. cit.

[13] Palmer, op. cit., 46, 53.

cannot lead to understanding given these constraints. For the need for understanding to be met, the subject of the conflict (racial harassment) cannot be only objectified (made subject to policy), but must remain subject to those for whom it was an incident.

As Gadamer see it, "knowing" is both historical and dialectical[14], and results from a "happening", a grasping of what is essential from the reciprocal interaction of the whole and the parts. Knowing results only if we first acknowledge that we do not know, and when we are open to coming to know that which we don't know. It transforms the importance of events, and meaning grows out of the revealed relationship between the whole and its parts.[15] This transformation results, in part, from our confrontation with heritage--others and our own--the hermeneutical experience. And the hermeneutical experience is possible only if all the parties are immersed in the event, engaged in a hermeneutical dialogue.[16]

When we recognized that the policy "question" is limited by the historical constructs of time and space, we can understand that even the best policy cannot achieve improved race relations. Policy addresses a particular historical understanding of the subject (racial harassment), and structures its question from that perspective. Policy is but one part of the hermeneutical circle.

Cultural Politics, Understanding and the Need for an Alternative Interpretive Frame

Both policy and curricular implications are held in this proposal. First we must acknowledge the importance of the conflict itself, and use it as an agent for understanding. While policies do acknowledge the conflict, they treat it as something to be dealt with formally and rationally. Policy is built on a linear model. Unfortunately the experience of race relations is not a linear one, and is

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[14] Palmer, op.cit., 195.

[15] Palmer, op. cit, 118-120.

[16] Palmer, op. cit., 197-199.

not subject to complete resolution according to the linear policy model. The experience of race relations is "an experience".

> Experience . . . is not the equivalent of the more familiar concept of behavior. An experience is more personal, as it refers to an active self, to a human being who not only engages but shapes action. We can have an experience but we cannot have a behavior; we describe the behavior of others but we characterize our own experience. . . . [W]e tell about our experiences which include not only actions and feelings, but reflections on those actions and feelings.[17]

Conflict needs to be dealt with viscerally, too, and as teachers we have the chance to make that happen. Experience, its expression and reflection upon it, can take place in the English, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and most other classrooms if we accept the responsibility to see our roles as educators defined by more than our disciplinary orientations. Morally, ethically and professionally we are called to *educate*, to draw out, rather than to *instruct*.

Gadamer, in his hermeneutic formula, notes that "experience" is only one-third of the elements required for a complete educative reaction. For *an* experience to be *experience* requires acknowledgement of and reaction to the immediacy of the lived experience. Student conduct hearings are divorced from that process; students are asked to rationalize action in disciplinary hearings. In classrooms they need not be so constrained, nor in the residence halls. Meaning needs to be explored in the present. Expression must be given to experience, not simply reflection on that experience, nor a rationalization of it. Rather expression is the imprint of the inner experience, the objectification of the experience (of will, knowledge, feeling) through ideas, actions and gestures. This is how life discloses itself to us. Finally, through this process, understanding, the grasping of the other, emerges. It is revealed, not all at once and not rationally; but it is revealed through the apprehending of the other.

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[17] Edward M. Bruner, "Experience and Its Expressions," in The Anthropology of Experience, Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, eds., Illini Books edition (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 5.

Apprehending is distinguished from the "explanation" of the Other; explanation is an intellectual act. In the process of apprehending we rediscover our Self *in* the Other because the ability to understand requires us first to confront and understand our heritage, knowing ourselves before we confront the unfamiliar heritage of the other. In this sense, the experience asks questions of us as well as us of the experience. What results are larger horizons of shared experience out of which greater understanding will emerge.

As teachers (curricular and cocurricular), what can we do the promote this important ancillary process? I would suggest first that classroom teachers make use of the experience to help create experience, that residence halls personnel use programming to explore issues, reveal feelings, and create experience, rather than conveying information or moralistic preachments. It requires us to acknowledge the role conflict plays in the process of understanding and to use that conflict in our work.

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